

Slave Hospital

Oakland had a building, about which we know little, that had the express purpose of serving as a slave infirmary. It was staffed with at least one full-time nurse, and doctors were consulted regularly. A slave infirmary or hospital was highly desirable not only for effective and sanitary treatment of the sick, but also to isolate contagious slaves from the general population. Slave hospitals had separate rooms for the care of sick and contagious patients and those who were giving birth or recovering from deliveries. The former were referred to as "sick rooms" and the latter as "lying-in rooms."

A plantation as large as Bermuda needed to have a roomy, well-crafted hospital. Maintaining health was a continuous concern of Cane River Plantation owners and slaves. In addition to the medical care provided by owners and physicians, slaves themselves relied heavily on their own midwives or "granny women" [herbalists] both in crisis and for preventative treatments such as seasonal teas.¹

1. Oakland Plantation, Its People Testimony by Anne Malone
pp. 63-64